



ASHEVILLE'S ENSLAVED PEOPLE



Wartime Servitude



When the war began, more than 15 percent of Buncombe County's residents were enslaved people. James Patton housed slaves behind his Eagle Hotel (straight ahead) where they worked as waiters, maids, grooms, cooks, and trail guides. Three blocks to your right, enslaved people lived and worked in James Smith's Buck Hotel, store,

stable, tannery, and blacksmith shop. Slaves worked in the Confederate rifle factory that stood to your right.

Fearing that slaves would join the Union army occupying eastern North Carolina, Gov. Zebulon B. Vance decreed, "It is the duty of all slave-owners immediately to remove [to the west] their slaves able to bear arms." The Confederate government issued a similar order for coastal South Carolina. As white refugees and their slaves streamed into Asheville, the enslaved population doubled, causing housing and food shortages. Some slaves here escaped to Union-occupied Tennessee. Others aided Union fugitives, providing food, clothing, and directions. One slave tried to help a New York cavalryman escape.

White Asheville residents reported that the slaves welcomed Union Gen. George Stoneman's soldiers as liberators on April 25, 1865. Fannie Patton wrote, "[W]e saw that the troops were going to move and also that a great many Negroes were going to leave with them. About 20 of ours went off, which, with those that had gone



Asheville's newly freed population lined up to register to vote on Public Square, two blocks to your right. *Harper's Magazine*, 1867

a few days before, made 29." Mary Taylor Brown wrote, "All of Mrs. J.W. Patton's servants left her and went with the Yankees. ... They even took her beautiful carriage and, crowding into it, drove off in full possession." Cornelia Henry wrote her husband, "You have no idea how big the [Negroes] feel. Ole Sam and Lena there is no difference, but take care for the others. Even Rose feels her freedom."



Eagle Hotel – Courtesy North Carolina Collection, Pack Memorial Library, Asheville